

By STUART EARP Wycombe Wanderers 4, Ilford 0

FOUR sparkling second half goals sent Wycombe Wanderers racing into second position in the Rothmans Isthmian League at Loakes Park on Tuesday night with an emphatic victory over struggling Ilford.

Wycombe, after a dismal first half, made the most of their advantage of an extra man when Ilford skipper Steve Barrett was sent off in the closing stages of the first half.

Wanderers' second half goal spree tended to overshadow the goings on in the first 45 minutes, which provided precious little entertainment for the fans. They were never allowed to play by a physical Ilford side who need every point they can get to avoid the drop into Division Two. Eventually the visitors' crude tactics were penalised when Barrett was sent off by referee John Martin for taking a kick at Ian Pearson. Gordon Riddick was also booked in the second half.

Ironically, Ilford showed that they could play without the physical tactics and their strikers looked dangerous on occasions. They worked hard and gave Wycombe little time or space in which to manoeuvre but then spoilt their performance with crude fouls that brought dozens of stoppages.

The tactics succeeded in throwing Wanderers out of their stride in the first half. As a result Wycombe's passing deteriorated and they looked anything but 4-0 winners at half time. But after the interval the Blues really went to town and once they had broken the ice, they tore Ilford's defence to shreds. Highlight of the 90 minutes was a brilliant volley from Graham Mackenzie which found the net from 25 yards.

Manager John Reardon gave a vote of confidence to the side that had beaten Sutton 3-0 on Saturday and an early attack augured well when Mackenzie sent the overlapping Paul Birdseye through.

But the Blues found it hard to break down a four man midfield shield operated by the visitors. Constantly chasing and harassing, Ilford were quicker to the ball on most occasions and restricted Wycombe's attacks to a minimum.

PUNISHMENT

Ray Mumford and Birdseye were both close to own goals in the first half while many of the Wanderers attacks petered out with poor passing. Whenever danger threatened Ilford were not averse to dishing out punishment and referee Martin was forced to halt the game for numerous niggling offences.

Towards the end of the half the fouls became more frequent and eventually the fiery Barrett lost his temper in the 43rd minute. He was jostling for the ball with Pearson, who tugged the Ilford full back's shirt. Barrett aimed a kick at Pearson which missed — but was spotted by the referee, who surprised many people by producing the red card and dismissing the Ilford man. Pearson's offence went unpunished.

A booking earlier in the game might have halted Ilford's tactics and although Mr Martin's action seemed severe some action was needed to halt Ilford's tackling which was dangerously high at times.

In the two minutes before the break Wanderers carved out their best chance of the half when Mackenzie put Evans clear. He ran on with only the goalkeeper to beat but sliced his shot wide to the groans of the crowd.

A half time roasting from the manager certainly did the trick for Wycombe, for once they had broken through, they became a changed side. They took complete control of midfield, the front runners looked far more dangerous while the back four was as reliable as ever.

FINE PROSPECT

Both Mackenzie and John Priestley enjoyed fine games and both crowned their displays with goals. Mackenzie looks a fine prospect and could well keep out Peter Cruse and Gavin Fraser if he continues to show the vision and skill demonstrated against Ilford. It is easy to overlook the performance of the defence but Alan Phillips and Keith Mead were towers of strength at the

back while Birdseye's frequent forays into Ilford's half were a constant menace.

The breakthrough came after 53 minutes. Ilford, down to 10 men, lost possession near half way. Evans won the ball and pushed it forward to Pearson who sprinted on unchallenged. Gary Calder came out but Wycombe's leading marksman gave him no chance with the perfect finish. It was Ian's 37th goal of the season.

Ilford now had no choice but to abandon their defensive policy and attack Wycombe which suited the home side down to the ground. They had more space to work in and only two fine pieces of covering by Jim Degaris prevented goals in quick succession. First he headed Holfield's effort off the line and then blocked Howard Kettleborough's header seconds later.

There was an uncomfortable two minutes for the Blues when Ilford forced five successive corners on the bottom wing but John Maskell came to the rescue by holding Steve Moss's header under the crossbar. Wanderers immediately returned to the attack and scored their second in the 67th minute. Priestley made and finished the goal by taking a quick free kick to Evans. He crossed to the far post where



STEVE HILL
... fourth goal

Kettleborough headed into the middle for Priestley to tuck home.

SUPERB VOLLEY

Four minutes later Mackenzie cracked home his superb volley from outside the box after Calder had punched away Pearson's corner. Evans had the chance to make it 4-0 when Birdseye set up the opportunity, but again, the Wycombe forward crashed the ball over the top when it looked easier to score. It was not Dylan's night and he was eventually replaced by Steve Hill.

A glorious move in the 75th minute almost brought another goal. Maskell threw the ball to Birdseye, who found Pearson on the flank. He flicked the ball inside to Mackenzie whose cheeky back-heel sent the ball into Kettleborough's path. But Calder spoilt it all by pulling off a great save.

Pearson should have scored when he raced onto a through ball and beat the challenge of Calder who had raced 15 yards out of his penalty area to try and boot the ball away. The goal was wide open but Ian tried to make sure and was caught in possession by a defender. Wanderers got their fourth goal in the 83rd minute when Pearson crossed perfectly to the far post where Hill was unmarked. It was almost the substitute's first touch of the ball and he placed it beautifully into the far corner of the net to complete the victory and Wycombe's second successive £40 bonus.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell; P. Birdseye, K. Mead, A. Phillips, R. Davies; G. Mackenzie, J. Priestley, M. Holfield; D. Evans (sub. S. Hill 77 mins.), H. Kettleborough, I. Pearson.

ILFORD: G. Calder; R. Mumford, P. Fairclough, G. Riddick, S. Barrett; J. Roseman, J. DeGaris, P. Gredley, J. Bookman; J. Ritchie, S. Moss. Sub. J. Coates (not used).

Referee: J. Martin (Alton).
Half-time: 0-0. **Goalscorers:** Pearson (53), Priestley (62), Mackenzie (67), Hill (83).

Attendance: 1,000.